

# STRANGE

AND

## Dreadful NEWS

From the Town of

## BEDFORD,

IN THE

## County of Bedford,

Being the Sad and Dismal Relation of two Dreadful  
• Fires that hapned there on the 12th and 13th Days  
of this Instant *April*, 1688. The Time and Places  
where they hapned, the Destruction and Desolation  
they made, together with all the Circumstances at-  
tending those Conflagrations, and what else material-  
ly fell out during the Consternation and Confusion  
they occasioned; and may serve as a warning or cauti-  
on against Negligence, through which so many Mis-  
chiefs of this kind come to pass.

**M**ANY and deplorable have been the Casualties and Misfortunes by the  
devouring Element of Fire, the effects of which Conflagrations has fre-  
quently proved the Ruine of whole Families, who undoubtedly thought  
themselves a few hours before sufficiently possessed of a convenient Com-  
petency, and flattered themselves in security and a long Enjoyment of their Goods  
and Houses; nay, many times the inexorable Flames have extended their undi-  
stinguishing Rage yet farther, even to the surprizing the Owners lives, by chan-  
ging with such unexpected Precipitation their Beds of Down and soft repose for the  
destroying Embraces of circling Fires, which have compelled them from this into  
the other World, without the least respite or time to consider any thing material  
as to their Eternal Estate, the very reflecting on which must undoubtedly strike an  
Air of sadness into the Breast of any one where the least spark of Compassion has its  
abode. And yet has not its sad Effect, attended with so much Ruine and Desolati-  
on, produced that Care and Caution that might prevent it, but still fresh Examples  
of Carelessness and Neglect furnish us with new Misfortunes of the same kind, as  
the following Relation may more fully demonstrate in two Fires hapning at di-  
stinct Places in the Town of *Bedford* in the County of *Bedford*, &c. within a few  
hours

hours distance or space, which for the strangeness of them, and yet further to warn Careless and Negligent People, I have thought convenient to make the subject of this Paper.

At one Mrs. Caine's, a Trader in Chandlery-ware, Grocery, &c. having for the benefit of the former, erected a melting-House adjoining to that of her Dwelling-House and Shop, so it hapned that on the twelfth of April a considerable quantity of Tallow for the making Candles having been melted, and that care not taken, as in such Cases is requisite in extinguishing the Fire, or removing the Tallow and other combustible matter far enough from it, about ten in the Evening a great Smoak being perceived by some of the Neighbours, and search made, they too sadly found that the Fire had taken hold of the main Timber, which suddenly getting Air, fell into a Flame, and for want of Engines and such other Matters as are requisite upon these Occasions, though no Endeavours that could be afforded to suppress it were wanting, it soon got the mastery; and being amongst wooden Buildings, urged by the Wind that blew very strong at that time, it raged in a fearful manner; so that being discerned at a great distance, the People came in from all parts, especially at the usual signal of Fire given in ringing the Bell backward, &c. and indefatigably proceeded in sparing no labour for extinguishing it by carrying and handing Water, setting up Ladders, pulling down Appartments, and drawing away the Timber to prevent its Progress; however, growing more and more Outrageous, it continued burning for the space of four Hours before it could be suppressed or brought under; in which time it consumed the Melting-House, with a vaste quantity of Tallow and all the Materials, with other Cumbustibles, as likewise the greatest part of the back Houses, and many other Appendances, conjectured to the Damage of a 1000 Pounds: And whilst the Fire continued at height, the sheets of Flame carried off by the Wind, destroyed and withered up several Trees beginning to put out and flourish with Leaves and Blossoms, &c.

The before mentioned Fire, which is somewhat strange, being extinguished, and the Hurry and Confusion it occasioned a little over, soon after Day began to appear the Inhabitants were again alarmed by the breaking out of another Fire at the East end of the Town, a considerable distance from the former, which began in a Malt-house or Kilne, adjoining to or very near the House of one Mistress Risley, whose Houses or Buildings were consumed by it, which suddenly blazing out, drew the People, nor yet altogether dispersed, to this second Conflagration; and although they used as much diligence as in the former, and their number, it now being day-light, increased, yet it prevailed against their Industry, and in a Trice sunk many considerable Buildings in its Flames, with great quantities of Malt, abundance of Bays, Ricks of Peas and Beans, and Barns of Corn, with Mows of Wheat, and all the Malting Utensils; with divers other Goods of great value, many Ware-houses rent, overturned and defaced, with many more Mischiefs attending such Misfortunes. This Fire continuing from first to last about four Hours, the Damage of which is computed much greater than the former, and though it so happily fell out, that no Person as we heard of was killed, yet divers were bruised and wounded by their too near venturing upon the fall of Timber, &c. and others much singed and burnt by the sheets of Flame driven in their Faces, through the fury of the Wind, &c.

Thus, Reader, have I given you the Relation of two sad Disasters, falling out as a Matter not usual in one and the same Town successively, and in the space of a very few Hours, though considerably distant from each other; but by what means they hapned, unless by Carelessness, and that most probable, is not known: However, a worthy Gentleman Living in that Town, upon noting the difficulty to extinguish the Fire for want of necessary Conveniencies, the better to facilitate it, if again any such sad Accidents should happen, voluntarily proposed at his proper Charge, to give an Engine for the Publick Use of the Town of Bedford.

Licensed, April 17th 1688.

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